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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 447-4330

Letter No. 2503

April 12, 1991

MANDATORY NUTRITION LABELING -- USDA has proposed mandatory nutrition labeling for all processed meat & poultry products, a move that could revamp close to 250,000 different food labels. USDA also proposed voluntary labels for fresh products, says Jo Ann R. Smith, assistant secretary of agriculture for marketing & inspection services.

"Consumers deserve more information about the nutrient content of all food they purchase," Smith said. "We believe consumers have the right to nutrition information and we want to make it easier for them to make informed dietary choices." USDA's public request for consumer comments on nutrition labeling is the latest step in USDA's labeling-reform effort. Comments are due June 3 to Policy Office, Attention: Linda Carey, FSIS Hearing Clerk, Room 3171-S, FSIS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Contact: Jim Greene (202) 382-0314.

SPECIAL HOUSING FOR RURAL NEEDY -- A new USDA program to provide housing to America's most needy rural counties is already succeeding, says La Verne Ausman, administrator of USDA's Farmers Home Administration. The new program targets 100 counties in 19 states & Puerto Rico to receive special housing assistance. "Our intent is to improve the quality of affordable housing by targeting funds to areas that have severe, unmet rural housing needs," Ausman says. The 19 states are: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Puerto Rico, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia & West Virginia. Contact: Sally Lawrence (202) 447-6903.

RECLAIMING THE NIGHT -- When the sun goes down in rice country, everyone flees indoors. Why? To escape swarms of mosquitoes with unusually voracious, highly irritating bites & the ability to transmit diseases to humans, domestic animals & wildlife. A team of USDA & state ag experiment station scientists has helped residents of Stuttgart, Ark., reclaim the night. The scientists made Stuttgart a test site & developed some improved insect management strategies. Some of the strategies included: new formulations of insect growth hormones, some new mosquito repellents & learning which insects feed on mosquitoes. Contact: G. J. Musick (501) 575-4446.

SMOKERS FEEL IT IN THEIR BONES -- Women smokers who worry about developing osteoporosis now have another reason to quit smoking, according to a USDA study. The two-year study found smoking accelerates the loss of bone mineral -- at least in some bones, says Elizabeth Krall, principal investigator. "The effect of smoking on bone mineral may not be nearly as great as the effect of estrogen loss, a low calcium intake or the lack of physical activity," Krall says. "Smoking is a small influence, but it's an influence." Contact: Elizabeth A. Krall (617) 556-3074.

GLOBAL WARMING -- A buildup in the atmosphere of two gases that promote global warming has been encouraged by cultivation of grasslands & use of nitrogen fertilizer, a USDA study found. Concentrations of methane & nitrous oxide have risen dramatically over the past few decades & together account for about 20 percent of total expected global warming. **Contact: Kevin Bronson (303) 482-5733.**

HOW TO GET RID OF A WEED -- USDA scientists have finished a study on how to eradicate common crupina, a menacing weed that threatens cropland & rangeland in Idaho, Oregon & Washington. In addition to cropland & rangeland, the weed also poses harm to crop production, watersheds, native plants wildlife & farm exports, says **James W. Glosser**, administrator of USDA's Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service. Common crupina is an exotic weed, first found in the U.S. near Grangeville, Idaho, in 1968. "Today the weed has infested 63,500 acres in north central Idaho, Umatilla County, Ore., and Chelan County, Wash.," Glosser says. The USDA study recommends eradicating the weed using integrated pest management. **Contact: Caree Vander Linden (301) 436-7280.**

OLDER AMERICANS FACE SPECIAL RISKS -- The effects of aging, including a weakened immune system, poor eyesight & reduced senses of smell & taste, puts 35 million Americans over 65 at increased risk from foodborne illness. May is Older American's Month, says **Lester M. Crawford**, administrator of USDA's Food Safety & Inspection Service. "This is a good opportunity to educate older people about foodborne risks and how they can protect themselves by following the basic rules of safe food handling," Crawford said. **Contact: Jim Greene (202) 382-0314**

EFFECTS OF ASPIRIN & ALCOHOL -- Don't believe the myth that taking aspirin before drinking limits the effects of alcohol consumption, says **Peggy Caruso** of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service. Recent research suggests that two aspirins can turn an innocent drink into a stiff one; and social drinking into legal drunkenness. In a study at the Mount Sinai alcohol research center in the Bronx Veterans Affairs Medical Center in New York, men who took aspirin before taking a drink absorbed 40 to 100 percent more alcohol into their bloodstreams than they did without the aspirin. **Contact: Peggy Caruso (504) 388-4141.**

DID YOU KNOW? Each person spent an average of \$1,691 for food in 1989 (figured at retail prices), compared with \$1,645 in 1979 (at 1989 dollars) & \$1,522 in 1969 (again in 1989 dollars) ... The expense of operating U.S. farms averaged nearly \$575 per person in the U.S. ... There are 2.14 million farms in the U.S.; the average size is 461 acres ... Each U.S. consumer is supported annually by the output of only one & one-quarter acres of land ... Farm assets, including real estate, farm operator households, livestock & poultry, machinery, crops totaled over a trillion dollars in 1990. **Contact: Kelly Shipp (202) 447-4623.**

Editor: Marci Hilt Phone: (202) 447-6445

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1766 -- Brenda Curtis interviews a foreign service officer who is a first-hand witness to the changes in the USSR over the past year & its impact on the Soviet people. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1248 -- A new housing program; change in the basic food groups; no-rub news ink; life in the USSR; plant a tree. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1757 -- USDA News Highlights; will there be more credit guarantees for the Soviets; more markets in the Persian Gulf; dividing the food dollar; ag progress days. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1415 -- Secret of Egyptian cotton; studying cotton toxins; nutrition study volunteers; cooking for research; nutrients & the brain. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Thurs., April 18, ag outlook; Fri., April 19, dairy outlook, U.S. ag trade update, cattle on feed; Tues., April 23, weekly weather & crop update, catfish production; Wed., April 24, rice outlook; Thurs., April 25, oil crops outlook. (These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling!)

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.

Material changed at 5 p.m., EST, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

(Week of April 11, 13 & 15, 1991)

FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on the National Grove of State Trees at USDA's National Arboretum; Will Pemble reports on USDA research to protect cattle from grub insects; Michigan State's Dave Luciani reports on better packaging for food exports.

ACTUALITIES -- Ray Motha, USDA meteorologist, with a crop & weather update; James Donald, chairman of USDA's World Board, on the latest crop production report; James Cason, manager of USDA's Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, on crop insurance; Carole Davis, a nutritionist with USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service, on the food groups; Fred Deneke, USDA's Forest Service, on Arbor Day tree planting.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on demographic changes in rural America over the years; Lynn Wyvill on safer handling of foods; DeBoria Janifer on healthy weights for Americans.

EVERY OTHER WEEK: AG UPDATE, five minutes of USDA farm program information, presented in news desk format with B-Roll.

Available on Satellite Westar IV, Transponder 12D (Channel 23), audio 6.2 or 6.8:

THURSDAY7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EST

SATURDAY10 - 10:45 a.m., EST

MONDAY8 - 8:45 a.m., EST

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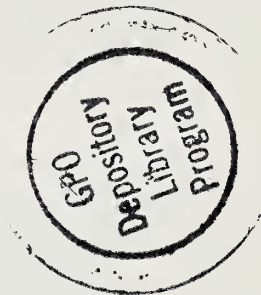
FRUIT TREES...in southeast Iowa are producing blossoms early this year, says John Weir (KBUR, Burlington). Temperatures in the mid-80s have hurried the blooming season by at least two weeks, which creates danger to the fruit if the weather turns freezing cold. John says field work is underway & the year is starting with ample moisture conditions.

STATE FUNDING...share for production of market reports has been cut, which prompted a meeting with the farm broadcasting staff of KRVN & USDA's AMS, says Rich Hawkins (KRVN, Lexington, Neb.). AMS updated KRVN on how USDA produces market reports & is modernizing the reporting system. KRVN now plans to give on-air credit to AMS for the day's figures. Rich says the livestock industry is doing well, but crop producers are apprehensive about the paperwork burden involved with complying with environmental provisions of the farm bill. He says big producers tell him they are losing incentive to remain in production programs.

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Office of Public Affairs
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U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250-1300

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CROPS...are coming out of dormancy in response to summer-like temperatures, says Roger Strom (WCCO, Minneapolis, Minn.), but snow is in the forecast. Grain and bean producers are looking forward to a good year. Dairy producers are facing tough times; production costs remain above income. Roger says local co-ops predict the loss of 106 dairy farms this year.

MOVING...MAGNET Radio, St. Paul, Minn., to a new location in St. Paul -- 1370 Davern St., 55116. Tom Rothman of MAGNET says the network uses the talent of ten farm broadcasters around the state and five regional farm directors to produce its programming. Andy Alcock, formerly on the TV staff at Mississippi State, has moved to the sunny beaches of the equatorial Pacific where he is reporting for Guam Cable TV news. Thanks to Tyson Gair (Mississippi State TV News Service) for the information.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Vic Powell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

VIC POWELL
Chief, Radio & TV Division